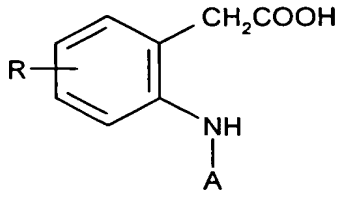
What is Claimed Is:

1. A compound of formula (I)




(I)

wherein

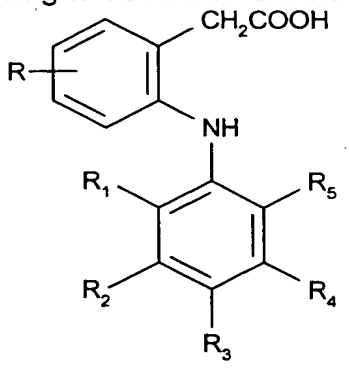
R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl, hydroxy, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy, trifluoromethyl or cyano; and

A is biaryl, optionally substituted β-naphthyl, bicyclic heterocyclic aryl, ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl-monocyclic carbocyclic aryl, or ($C_5$ or $C_6$)cycloalkane fused-monocyclic carbocyclic aryl; provided that when bicyclic heterocyclic aryl is optionally substituted quinolinyl, R is located at the 5-position and R does not represent hydrogen;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

2. A compound according to claim 1, wherein A represents optionally substituted β-naphthyl, optionally substituted quinolinyl, optionally substituted isoquinolinyl, optionally substituted 5,6,7,8-tetrahydronaphthyl, optionally substituted indanyl, optionally substituted biphenylyl, optionally substituted ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl-phenyl or optionally substituted monocyclic heteroaryl-phenyl; provided that when A is optionally substituted quinolinyl, R is located at the 5-position and R does not represent hydrogen.

3. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (II)




(II)

wherein

R is hydrogen, ($C_1$-$C_4$)alkyl, ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy, cyano or trifluoromethyl;

$R_1$ is hydrogen, fluoro, chloro, ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkyl or trifluoromethyl;

$R_2$ is hydrogen, fluoro, chloro, ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkyl or trifluoromethyl;

$R_3$ is optionally substituted phenyl or ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl;

$R_4$ is hydrogen, halo, lower alkyl or trifluoromethyl; and

$R_5$ is halo, lower alkyl or trifluoromethyl;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

4. A compound according to claim 3 of formula (II),

wherein

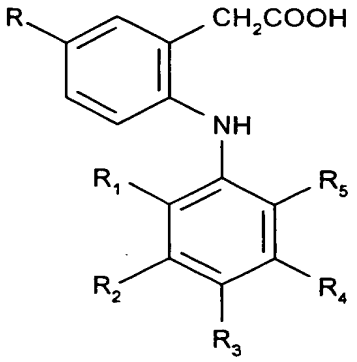
R is hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, propyl, methoxy, chloro, fluoro, cyclopropyl, cyano, trifluoromethoxy or trifluoromethyl;

$R_1$, $R_2$, $R_4$ and $R_5$ are, independently, hydrogen, fluoro or chloro; and

$R_3$ is ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl, phenyl, or phenyl mono- or poly-substituted independently by lower alkyl, fluoro, chloro, lower alkoxy or ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkylenedioxy;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

5. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (III)




(III)

wherein

R is hydrogen, ($C_1$-$C_4$)alkyl, ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy or trifluoromethyl;

$R_1$ is hydrogen, chloro, fluoro or ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkyl;

$R_2$ is hydrogen or fluoro;

$R_3$ is cyclopropyl, cyclohexyl, phenyl or phenyl substituted by chloro, fluoro, lower alkoxy, lower alkyl or lower alkylenedioxy;

$R_4$ is hydrogen, ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkyl, trifluoromethyl or fluoro; and

$R_5$ is fluoro, chloro or ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkyl;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

6. A compound according to claim 5,

wherein

R is ($C_1$ or $C_2$)alkyl, cyclopropyl, chloro or fluoro;

$R_1$ is chloro or fluoro;

$R_2$ is hydrogen or fluoro;

$R_3$ is cyclopropyl;

$R_4$ is hydrogen, methyl or fluoro; and

$R_5$ is fluoro;

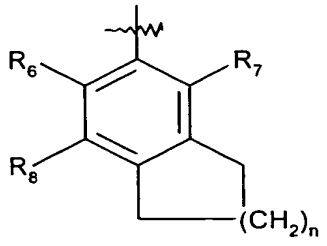
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

7. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (I),

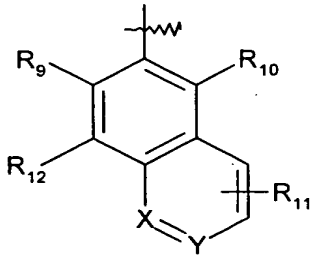
wherein

R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, ($C_3$-$C_6$)cycloalkyl, halo, lower alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy, cyano or trifluoromethyl; and

A is selected from radicals (a) and (b)




**(a)**




**(b)**

wherein in radical (a)

n is 1 or 2; and

$R_6$-$R_8$ are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl or halo; and

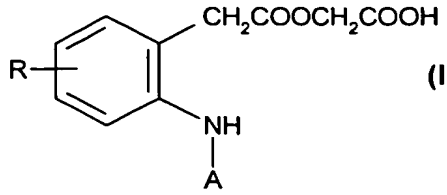
wherein in radical (b)

$R_9$-$R_{12}$ are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl or halo; and

X and Y are CH, or one of the X and Y is N and the other is CH; provided that when X is N and Y is CH, R is located at the 5-position and R does not represent hydrogen;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; or a pharmaceutically acceptable ester thereof.

8. A compound according to claim 1 of formula (Ia)




**(Ia)**

wherein R and A have meaning as defined in said claim; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

9. A pharmaceutical composition comprising an effective amount of a compound of claim 1 in combination with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carriers.

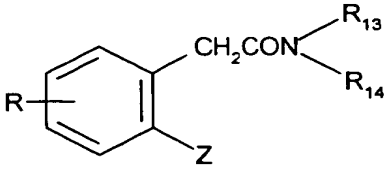
10. A method of treating cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) dependent disorders in mammals which comprises administering to a mammal in need thereof an effective amount of a compound of claim 1.

11. A method of selectively inhibiting COX-2 activity in a mammal without substantially inhibiting cyclooxygenase-1 activity which comprises administering to a mammal in need thereof an effective COX-2 inhibiting amount of a compound of claim 1.

12. A method of treating rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, dysmenorrhea, pain, tumors or inflammation in mammals which comprises administering to a mammal in need thereof a correspondingly effective amount of a compound of claim 1.

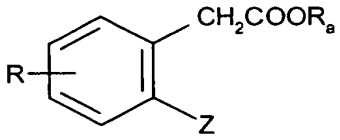
13. A method for the preparation of a compound of formula (I) of claim 1 which comprises:

a) coupling a compound of formula (IV) or (IVa)




**(IV)**

or




**(IVa)**

wherein

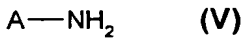
Z is iodo or bromo;

R has meaning as defined in claim 1;

$R_a$ is hydrogen, an alkali metal cation or lower alkyl, preferably isopropyl; and

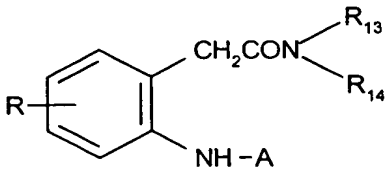
$R_{13}$ and $R_{14}$ are lower alkyl; or $R_{13}$ and $R_{14}$ together with the nitrogen atom represent piperidino, pyrrolidino or morpholino;

with a compound of formula (V)

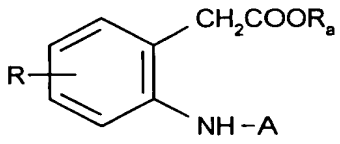


**(V)**

wherein A has meaning as defined in claim 1, in the presence of copper and cuprous iodide to obtain a compound of formula (VI) or (VIa)



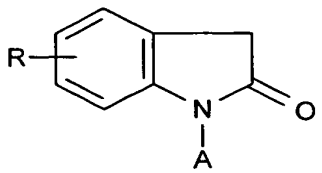
or



**(VI)** **(VIa)**

and hydrolyzing the resulting compound of formula (VI) or (VIa) to a compound of formula (I); or

(b) hydrolyzing a lactam of formula (IX)



**(IX)**

wherein

R and A have meaning as defined in claim 1, with a strong base; and

in above processes, if desired, temporarily protecting any interfering reactive groups and then isolating the resulting compound of the invention; and, if desired, converting any resulting compound into another compound of the invention; and/or if desired converting a free carboxylic acid of the invention into a pharmaceutically acceptable ester derivative thereof; and/or if desired, converting a resulting free acid into a salt or a resulting salt into the free acid or into another salt.